

## [Mrs. Caroline Geck Weir]

Marie Carter,

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Mrs. Caroline Geck Weir (Husband: W. C, Weir)

Interview: May 23, 1937. Mrs. Caroline Geak Weir lives in the family home of the Gecks at old Dona Ana. "This house," she explained, "dates back to 1839 or to the first colonists. My father, Lewis William Geck, who was a private soldier, settled on this land after the Mesilla Civil Colony Grant was established. In that year, which was 1850, half of the population of Dona Ana County moved to La Mesilla, Chihuahua. Some of our family seem to think that Lewis William Geck was a German, but he was not. He came from Poland, a stowaway, aboard a ship at the age of eleven. Here is part of a letter I received regarding his military record."

The letter proffered by Mrs. Weir was from Washington and read: "Lewis William Geck was assigned to Co. H, 1st Dragoons from which he was honorably discharged at Dragoon Camp near Evensville, Ark., on January 12, 1846 by reason of term of service as private he reenlisted at St. Louis, Mo., for five years Feb. 6, 1846 and was assigned to Co. H, 1st Dragoons from which he was honorably discharged Feb. 6, 1851 by reason of expiration of term of service as a private he was stationed at Dona Ana, N. M. This soldier was born in Poland and was 23 years of age at first enlistment." C. 18 - [H. ?.]

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Resuming her narration of the family history Mrs. Weir explained: "My father, Lewis William Geck, was married three times. He was born in 1919 and died at the age of seventy-two. If you'll look out that east window you will see the graveyard, less than two hundred feet away from the house, where Lewis is buried between wife number one and wife number two. He reserved the center grave for himself and requested to be buried in it. Since I am a child by his third marriage it will be necessary to-explain about wife number one and wife number two. There to a tragedy too, but I'll tell you about that later. Mrs. Weir went to an old trunk fished out the family bible and said: "Read what it says for yourself." I read: Lewis William Geck was born on the 4th of June 1818 in the city of Warsaw, Kingdom of Poland. Got married on the 24th of April 1851 in the town of Mesilla, Mexico by Padre Ynojas. My wife was born at El Paso, Mexico on the 21st of February 1838, and died on the 12th of July 1853 at one o'clock in the morning with a child in bed. Her name was Margarita Severiana de Jeasus Barrio. Her father's name was Francisco Barrio. Her mother was Dolores Contreras.

"My child Jesusits Geck was born on the 12th of July 1853 on Thursday morning at 1 o'clock, when in a few minutes the mother expired."

Closing the bible Mrs. Weir explained: "Lewis William had to 3 have someone to take care of little Jesusita so he decided to marry again. His second wife was Beatrice Aguirre whom he married in 1854. Lewis William was a trader and a merchant and the front of this house / used for a storeroom. One night, while Beatrice and Lewis William were asleep, twelve robbers drilled a square block out of the wall and entered through the opening. They were so quiet about their work that the sleeping couple didn't hear them; not even when they emptied the money out of the cash box. After looting the store the twelve robbers boldly entered the bedroom. Lewis William, who was awakened by his wife's screams, started to get up but was dealt such a staggering blow that he fell back unconscious. Then binding and gagging their victim the robbers threw him on the floor. If they had known what a dangerous man they were dealing with, they'd have killed Lewis

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William, then and there.” Mrs. Weir paused then continued: “Now, I wonder why my father's hair didn't turn white or how he kept from going mad, as the robbers assaulted his wife and left her in a dying condition. Early the next morning a customer came to the store and knocked. On receiving no response the man became alarmed and called some of the neighbors. They tried to break the lock but finding that impossible combined their strength and forced 4 the door. Upon entering, however, they were somewhat puzzled, for there wasn't a soul in sight. Then suddenly they heard a faint moan from the direction of the front bedroom, Fearing, the saints only knew what, and preparing themselves for a sudden attack, they all picked up articles that would serve for weapons as they slowly advanced toward the closed door.” With a quick motion of her hands Mrs. Weir assured me: “The neighbors were shocked speechless when they found Lewis William and his wife. While the men hastened to unbind my father, the women gave their attention to Beatrice. You, see, she was expecting a baby and everything would have taken its natural course, but that awful experience had shattered her nervous system; so the child was born to soon. The baby was a boy, and as he came into this world, the poor little mother closed her eyes and passed on to the next. And Lewis William, towering above the bed where his young wife lay in death, raised his right hand to God, took an oath of vengeance and vowed: “For one dead body twelve will swing from the limbs of trees and be picked by a million crows.” Mrs. Weir commented on how fast news spread in a small place. “Why in less than an hour,” she said, the whole valley had heard about the tragedy and a lynching party was searching for the twelve robbers. Eight of them escaped. The other four, who were found at La Mesilla, were taken to Clarion Ranch between 5 Dona Ana and Las Cruces, where they were hung before the eyes of a cheering mob. In referring to the baby of Beatrice and Lewis William Geck, Mrs. Weir said: “That baby lived to be a grandfather. He always signed himself ‘W.C.P.Geck’, but he was christened, William Cidronio Pedro Geck. The name William was for his father. Cidronio was the saint's day upon which he was born, and Pedro was for his grandfather on his mother's side W.C.P. Geck, as he was known all through life, was my half brother. He moved to Anthony, New Mexico in 1902 where he built a home in which he lived until his death. W.C.P, served Anthony as Justice of the

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Peace for fifteen years. His children and grandchildren are residents of Anthony at the present time.” At the age of thirty-seven, Lewis William Geck, soldier, merchant and trader, had a third romance.” “The bride-to-be”, Mrs. Weir explained, “was Sarah Aguirre, first cousin to his second wife, Beatrice Aguirre. But Sarah was very young—a mere child of fifteen. Lewis William had a noble character though, and did something that very few men would have done. He married Sarah, but following the wedding, sent her with the daughter by his first wife, to the Sacred Heart Institute at S. Charles, Missouri, where she remained for three years. Then, when she was eighteen, he brought her back to Dona Ana.”

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Following an interval of silence Mrs. Weir resumed: “Sarah was my mother. She brought eight children into the world—Beatrice, Sam, Marion, Carolina, (Mrs. Weir) Mary, Wilhelmina, Lillian the 1st. and Lillian the 2nd. Lillian the 1st., died, and when another girl was born, she was named Lillian for her dead sister. Unusual but true. Our family had two girls by the same name.” Calling my attention to an old organ Mrs. Weir explained: “It was made by S.D. and H. W. Smith of Boston eighty-seven years ago, and was given by Lewis William to Sarah, my mother. The history of one man and three wives is very confusing so I shall repeat: Lewis William Geck's first wife, whom he married in 1851, was Margarita Severiana de Jesus Barrio. His second wife, whom he married in 1854, was Beatrice Aguirre, And his third wife, whom he married in 1860, was Sarah Aguirre, first cousin to his second wife. Every one of my mother's children were baptized in the old Mission church across the road.” In speaking of her early childhood Mrs. Weir said, “I started to school in this town and went through all the grades—they only had three. Then I went to Las Cruces and lived with some relatives while I attended school. My next schooling was in El Paso, Texas. I was a pupil in the first high school which was located where the Elk's building stands. I received a medal for 7 perfect attendance five consecutive years, and I'm just as proud of it this moment as I was the day I received it. During her conversation Mrs. Weir mentioned some of her teachers. “When I attended the old El Paso High,” she said Prof. Calvin Esterly was Superintendent of schools. Miss Ella B. Meekins was one

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of my teachers, and Laura Fink, who became Mrs. C.B.Kellogg, was another. In 1892 I returned to Dona Ana to teach school. I taught from 1893 to 1894. My nephew, Charley Geck senior of Anthony, New Mexico, was one of my first pupils. Dick Triviz, who was sheriff of Las Cruces from 1930 to 1934, was another one of my pupils. In 1896 I taught at La Union." In recalling her term as postmaster of Dona Ana Mrs. Weir stated: "I received my commission as postmaster on April 12, 1894, which office I held for one year. I didn't want it a second year, for I had an experience that disgusted me with post office work for the rest of my life. And it was all through the mistake of a man by the name of [A.?] M. Holland, a Spiritualist, who started a colony here in 1892. Resuming her story Mrs. Weir Explained: "Mr. Holland was in the habit of ordering large bills of merchandise from Sigel & 8 Cooper in Chicago and had always received his goods on time. One day he came to the office with a three hundred dollar order which he gave to me to register. A few days later he came back and ask me if his merchandise had arrived. When I told him it had not had time he was peeved. So finally he got worried and wrote to Sigel & Cooper asking them why he had not received it. They wrote back and told him that they had received the order but no money. Well, he came to me and wanted to know what I had done with the money. When I asked him what money, he flew into a rage and accused me of stealing his three hundred dollars. I thought the man was mad, and ask my mother, who was my assistant, if she had accepted that amount of money from Mr. Holland. Her reply was the same as mine, but he didn't believe either one of us and left the office vowing to make trouble." Mrs. Weir and her mother spent their evenings praying that the lost money would turn up. "I never was so worried in all my life," she said, "for I had always been honest to a penny and to [be?] accused of theft almost killed me. Several days passed then the worst happened; Mr. Holland walked into the office followed by a post office inspector. He was very considerate however, and told me to go ahead and explain and not to be afraid because he knew I wasn't a thief. I tried to explain, but during my explanation I was crying so hard that I don't believe he understood a word I said. But he left telling me not to worry." Mrs. Weir did worry, for she could think of nothing but the lost money. "It was constantly on my mind," she said, "some nights I couldn't sleep at all and would

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spend the night sitting up in bed hoping and praying for a solution to the mystery of the lost money. In the meantime I had grown so thin and white that everybody thought I was going to be ill. I thought so myself for I couldn't eat. Then I received a surprise. The Inspector, closely followed by Mr. Holland, walked into the office. Mr. Holland had lost some of his swagger, and there was something about the way he hung his head that reminded me of a coyote. Then the Inspector smiled and told me my worries were at an end for he had located the money, and if I wanted to take legal action I could get a thousand dollars out of the [our?] who had done his best to send me to jail." Mrs. Weir told the Inspector that she didn't want Holland's money or anything he had. "Then Holland began to whine and to beg my pardon," she said, "but I shut him up by telling him to write a letter to the Postmaster General and tell him how he'd 10 accused an innocent girl of being a lowdown thief. I think the old fellow was fully punished though, for when the townsmen heard what had been done with the money they razed him for three months. The money, which was found in the dead letter office, was traced back to the sender, who turned out to be Holland. And instead of directing it to Sigel & Cooper, Chicago, he had absently directed it to Sigel & Cooper, El Paso, Texas." Mrs. Caroline Geck Weir to the mother of seven children—Cecilia Weir, who is now Mrs. Ralph Scoggins of El Paso, Texas; Lucile Weir wife of C.R. Riddle of Los Angeles, California; William Weir of Kermit, Texas, whose wife is the former Lucille Allen of Kermit; Lee Weir married and living in Los Angeles, California. Lee is a salesman whose wife is the former Kathryn Foster of Los Angeles; David Weir is unmarried and a skilled mechanic of El Paso, Texas; Lillian Weir is the wife of Ray Dukeminier of Silver City, where he is employed by the telephone company; they have two sons—Roy and Bobby; Jessie Weir is married and studying law at the University of Austin, Texas; his wife is the former Jerry Latham of El Paso, Texas. The Lathams have one son—Billy; all of Mrs. Weir's children have finished high school.

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Note: When the military posts at Dona Ana and El Paso were abandoned, Fort Fillmore was established September 23, 1851, having been chosen as a better defence position

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than the two abandoned forst. At the time of its establishment the post was occupied by Company H, 1st Dragoons and Companies E and K 3rd Infantry. Lewis William Geck was assigned to Company H, 1st Dragoons twice. From which be was honorably discharged both times. On January 12, 1846, he was discharged at Dragoon Camp near Evensville, Ark. He reenlisted at St. Louis, Missouri for five years Feb. 6, 1846 and was assigned to the same company. He was honorably discharged from Company H, 1st Dragoons Feb. 6, 1851 by reason of expiration of term of service as private. When he received his second and last discharge he was stationed at Dona Ana, New Mexico. This soldier, who sleeps in the Dona Ana graveyard, less than two hundred feet east of the old homestead, is the father of Caroline Geck Weir, who staunchly declares: "It is up to me to hold the fort." The letter from Washington regarding Levis William Geck's military record was signed: "Frank C. Bennett Brigadier General Acting Adjutant General."